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Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Open Access Forum 2011: Experts' Meeting on Open Access

Address by

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Distinguished invited experts in the field of Open Access,

Observer representatives of Delegations to UNESCO,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this, the first ever meeting at UNESCO of experts on Open Access. We are thankful to you for accepting our invitation and attending this meeting that is highly significant not only for us at UNESCO, but also for the world of research and innovation to which you are all associated.

The issue of access to information is dear to everyone involved in research, innovation and creativity – in the sciences, culture and the humanities. Thinking of quality education without access to new knowledge is impossible. As knowledge is growing by leaps and bounds, access to information is becoming a challenge due to a variety of reasons. The multilingual nature of created knowledge, intellectual property laws, poor access to technology, spiralling cost of information, and preservation of information and cultural heritage are but a few of the challenges before us to have universal access to information. While the challenges are many, the concept and philosophy of Open Access brings to us a variety of solutions to improve access to information and knowledge primarily due to the increasing access to the Internet.

Since you are experts in this field I would not go into the approaches and solutions that Open Access provide, but would like to urge you to discuss how UNESCO can provide a platform to promote and develop Open Access in the world. We have developed the UNESCO Open Access strategy in consultation with the Member States according to their needs, and it has been adopted by the General Conference in its 36th session. You have a copy of this document with you. Please discuss this, and identify the areas that needs to be strengthened, who are the potential partners, how to proceed in each of the strategic objectives listed to improve the overall scenarios of access to peer reviewed information.

You know that one of the mandates of UNESCO is to “Maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge, by :

- assuring the conservation and protection of the world’s inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science, and recommending to the nations concerned the necessary international conventions;
- encouraging cooperation among the nations in all branches of intellectual activity, including the international exchange of persons active in the fields of education, science and culture and the exchange of

publications, objects of artistic and scientific interest and other materials of information; and

- initiating methods of international cooperation calculated to give the people of all countries access to the printed and published materials produced by any of them.”

Also access to and sharing the benefits of scientific advancement is a Human Right as proclaimed in Article 27 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration (1948), which says:

“Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.”

Therefore, we consider that Open Access to scientific information is both a researcher’s greatest output and technological innovation’s most important resource. I personally look forward to the recommendations of the expert group present here to strengthen UNESCO’s Open Access programme. We consider you, the community of Open Access practitioners, as an extended arm of our Secretariat and look forward to receive insights as well as inputs to identify the needs in the field, where UNESCO can make significant impact though its limited resources. While you discuss the recent

trends and the issues in the next two days, I would also request you to spend time on discussing partnerships and collaborations, and how to improve access to scientific information in the developing countries.

On 1 November 2011, UNESCO launched the Global Open Access Portal (GOAP) that has information from 148 countries at different levels of depth depending on the status of Open Access in the specific countries. This will be a work in progress, and we would like to improve its contents continuously seeking contributions from the Open Access practitioners. For this, the Portal is supported by a strong Open Access Community with over 1450 members within the WSIS Knowledge Communities platform. I am sure many of you are members of the OA community, and will continue to support us online in cyberspace.

We have also developed a comprehensive document entitled “Policy Guidelines for the Development and Promotion of Open Access” written by Dr. Alma Swan, who is present with us today in this meeting. Since policy advice to Member States is a core activity identified in the Open Access strategy, this document will be printed early next year and would be widely circulated. I take this

opportunity to thank Dr. Alma Swan and the members of the OA Community for discussing this document online for peer review.

Besides Open Access to scientific information, the Knowledge Societies Division of the Communication and Information sector has been working in the field of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Free and Open Source Software (FOSS). Open Access-Open Educational Resources-Free and Open Source Software form a strong tripod approach for us that drives our efforts to build knowledge societies using cost-effective and efficient solutions to the problems of humanity through increased access to information.

I look forward to the deliberations and to the final recommendations of the expert meeting. I once again thank you all for coming to UNESCO and sparing your valuable time for this cause. I am sure your efforts will help UNESCO and the world of Open Access in a better way and your contributions in this meeting will be recognised by the stakeholders.

Thank you for your attention.